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**TRI-BOARD MEETING –  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN, FINANCE COMMITTEE & SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
MARCH 12, 2014**

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**I. Call to Order/Roll Call**

Selectmen Chairman Alex Vispoli reconvened the Tri-Board Meeting to order at 7:04 P.M. in the School Committee Room in the School Administration Building. Present from the Selectmen: Chairman Vispoli-Y and Selectmen Mary Lyman-Y, Paul Salafia-Y. Dan Kowalski-Y, Brian Major-Y.

Finance Committee Chairman S. Jon Stumpf opened the meeting for the Finance Committee. Present: Chairman Stumpf-Y and members Joanne Marden-Y, Paul Fortier-Y, Margaret Kruse-Y, Linn Anderson-Y, Greg Serrao-Y, Eugenie Moffitt-Y, John Barry, Jr.-Y.

School Committee Chairman Dennis Forgue opened the meeting for the School Committee. Present: Chairman Forgue-Y and members Paula Colby-Clements-Y, Annie Gilbert-Y, Barbara L'Italien-Y, David Birnbach-Y.

Also present: Town Manager Reginald S. Stapczynski, Superintendent Marinel McGrath, Assistant Superintendent Paul Szymanski, Assistant Superintendent Nancy Duclos, Student Services Director Joyce Laundré, Assistant Town Manager Steve Bucuzzo, and Finance Director Donna Walsh. The meeting was duly posted and cablecast live.

**II. Opening Ceremonies/Moment of Silence/Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairman Vispoli led the members in a Moment of Silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**III. FY-2015 Budget/CIP Presentations**

**School Department Budget Discussion**

Chairman Vispoli said the Boards have been talking at length about the budget and the direction they are headed in. They have received numerous requests for tax relief, requests to look at the rate of increase going forward and to reduce expenses. On Monday, the Board of Selectmen took a vote of support to reduce the budget by \$600,000 to provide some relief to taxpayers and to pursue that model going forward each year. The \$600,000 reduction would mean a \$200,000 reduction for the Town and \$400,000 for the School Department.

School Committee Chairman Dennis Forgue pointed out that we did not tax to the limit last year. The additional Chapter 70 funds that came in after Town Meeting were not appropriated.

Superintendent McGrath noted that the action taken by the Board of Selectmen on Monday is not reflected in the School Budget she is presenting at this meeting. The APS Mission, Vision and Strategic Plan are important documents that provide a perspective

and this Budget is more than a number, it is a shared vision of programs and services to provide a high-quality education to our students. In the past two years, tremendous gains in technology have been made in the classrooms across the district with professional development provided to teachers to support student learning and unleash the creative energy of students and teachers. Teaching and Learning: The Massachusetts new teacher evaluation program focuses on what students are learning and how to achieve greater learning. Partnerships have been formed with local colleges and universities as well as private industry reflecting advances made and executed from new technology. Dr. McGrath reviewed the budget development process and timetable and highlighted the major priorities and steps taken in building the budget.

The Preliminary FY-15 School Budget totals \$72,185,784 which includes salaries of \$58,890,954 and expenses of \$13,294,830. The Town Manager has proposed a budget of \$71,304,452 for the School Department leaving a gap of \$881,332 to close and with the added reduction voted by the Board of Selectmen on Monday, the gap will increase to \$1.2 million.

Strategic Plan requests include 2.0 FTEs for 12 sections at AHS for Engineering and Computer Science, JAVA classes and an internship program. A Pre-K-Grade 5 Literacy Specialist is requested to help address program needs in elementary reading and writing. This position would not increase the FTE count but instead reallocate an existing employee from a teaching to a supervisory position and require an increase of \$25,000 for salary differential. The FY-15 Level Services Enrollment and Compliance Requests Chart shows in detail the additional FTE's needed to address increased enrollment, additional programs, and State-mandated reporting requirements.

There are no reductions in current programs or services that would require layoffs. The total increase in the budget is 4.73% which is reasonable in order to maintain the quality of our programs and services. Many costs are fixed or mandated and, therefore, unavoidable. This budget does not include funds to add a 5<sup>th</sup> day of World Language at the middle schools or a World Language Program for the elementary level. She said she was also unable to implement Phase 2 of the Transition Program and unable to fund Digital Learning Specialists for the elementary schools.

This is not the final budget but the preliminary budget and going forward there will be thoughtful, challenging conversations with several factors still to be provided – State Aid, Chapter 70 funds, Town revenue receipts and deliberations on the Budget. The available revenue may not support the revenue request but we hope we can work collaboratively on behalf of our 6,100 students.

Discussion items:

- The percentage of the budget appropriated to Special Education and comparisons to other like communities and information on the DESE website.

- Request to produce a cost analysis on in-district Special Education costs. What the projected expense is for this year.
- Decrease in dollars due to fewer anticipated legal fees, savings from retired teachers, decrease in track changes due to new requirements, etc. Check increase in regular education transportation costs.
- Request to quantify donations under \$5,000 and to provide the ratio of grant funds vs the cost of the grant position.
- New AEA Teacher Contract.
- Focus on elementary literacy, reading, writing, math; making new investments in math and literacy programs next year where there is capacity to do so.
- Recommendations to close the gap.

#### Capital Projects – Capital Projects Fund – \$1,040,000

SCH-1 – School Projects for All Schools and SCH-2 – School Projects by Building:

Plant & Facilities Deputy Director Ed Ataide provided an update on School-1 and 2 explaining how a few projects were completed this year using funds leftover from last year thereby amending the request for School-1. School-2 has been amended to include priority one items only.

School-3 – Textbooks \$557,000: New adoptions are scheduled for K-5 Math and Grade 6-8 Math, Middle School Science and Engineering.

Dr. McGrath noted that funds for School 1, 2, and 3 have been combined into one lump sum over the past few years and this year IT-4 and IT-5 have been included in the combined funds of \$1,040,000. Ed Ataide and IT CIO Paul Puzzanghera will work together to determine what needs and projects can be accomplished within the amount allotted.

#### Capital Improvement Program

SCH-4 – AHS Addition & Renovation – Schematic Design Services \$350,000

Dennis Forgue distributed information on the scope of design for renovations and additions to AHS to address overcrowding issues. It is a conceptual cost estimate covering four issues: classrooms, cafeteria, library/media center and fire protection. The information shows both the lower and higher range of estimates. The request is to address the overcrowding at AHS especially the cafeteria and library media center and to use the space differently to take pressure off of classroom space. There are also issues regarding the fire suppression system and the need to bring the entire building up to code.

SCH-5 – Major School Projects \$1,500,000 prior to amendments.

Funds requested for the Collins Center carpeting, AHS lockers, DMS restroom accessibility(ADA), High Plain Playground turf, Shawsheen masonry (major cracks in the bricks), South School skylights that are leaking and resurfacing of the playground area, WMS boilers, and WHMS/HPE ceiling fans for a new total of \$1,465,000.

SCH-6 – School Site Improvement Plan \$319,000

Part of the master plan to update all school sites to meet ADA compliance and address safety issues, replace / repair catch basins sinkholes, and deteriorated pavements. The request is for the design only for the site renovation at West Elementary School.

P&F-7 – Town & School Energy Initiatives to realize savings through efficiencies.

IT-1 – Annual PC Replacement/Lease Program \$360,000\*

Hold for meeting on Thursday, March 20 at 8:00 P.M.

IT-2 - Virtual Desktop Deployment \$200,000

Paul Puzzanghera explained the request for Desktop Virtualization which is to use lower cost devices to display information and will provide tremendous efficiencies and benefit the Town, Schools, and students.

IT 4 and IT-5 – Student Mobile Carts requested in the amount of \$49,000

Three carts were added at AHS last year to open up classroom space by reducing stationary labs. This request will open up more classroom space for the additional courses in Engineering and Science and new computer courses. There are 30 laptops on each cart and leased for four years at a cost of \$49,000 per year. It is a multiple year commitment and the carts are 100% utilized.

**IV. Adjournment**

At 10:40 P.M. on a motion by Brian Major and seconded by Paul Salafia, the Board of Selectmen voted 4-0 to adjourn from the Triboard Meeting. Roll call: Chairman Vispoli-Y and Selectmen Dan Kowalski-Y, Brian Major-Y and Paul Salafia-Y.

On a motion by Annie Gilbert and seconded by Paula Colby-Clements, the School Committee voted 5-0 to adjourn from the Tri-Board Meeting. Roll call: Chairman Fogue-Y and members Barbara L'Italien-Y, Annie Gilbert-Y, David Birnbach-Y, Paula Colby-Clements-Y.

On a motion by Greg Serrao and seconded by John Barry, the Finance Committee voted to adjourn the Tri-Board Meeting: Chairman Stumpf-Y and members Joanne Marden-Y, Paul Fortier-Y, Margaret Kruse-Y, Linn Anderson-Y, Greg Serrao-Y, Eugenie Moffitt-Y, John Barry, Jr.-Y.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo

Recording Secretary